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AN
ACCOUNT
OF THE
CATHEDRAL
OF
LICHFIELD,

FROM ITS FOUNDATION TO THE PRSENT TIME,
INCLUDING A SERIES OF FIFTEEN
HUNDRED YEARS.

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ACCOUNT

OF THE

CATHEDRAL, &c.

IN the various persecutions of the christians, by the heathen Roman Emperors, that of Dioclesian, which began about three hundred years after Christ, was one of the most dreadful, and fell particularly upon the *Britons*, who were destroyed by the most excruciating deaths; when neither old age or infancy, manhood or weakness

were spared, but cruelty raged like a conflagration.

In this their extreme distress, three BRITISH KINGS raised a weak undisciplin'd army to oppose these veteran barbarians; and the battle was fought on the borders of *Staffordshire*, where the christian army, and their three Kings, were all massacred, their carcases and bones burnt, and heaped upon a hill, according to the ancient custom of burial after a battle, and cover'd with a mount of earth, or tumulus, where, probably if dug into, the urns and ashes will be still discovered; it is called *Barrow-cop-Hill* to this day; being the largest and highest tumulus amongst many in this country.

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When these dreadful persecutions were over, which, contrary to the hope of the persecutors, much increased, instead of suppressing the christian religion ; CONSTANTINE the GREAT, became its protector, and subduing his rivals, particularly the bloody tyrant MAXENTIUS, under the banner of the cross, he gave to christianity a legal establishment.— But having fix'd his seat of empire in his own city, *Constantinople*,—in the following ages, the western part of the empire was overrun by Goths, Vandals, Lombards, &c. and obliged to recall its armies from *Britain*, with the flower of the British Youth, for the defence of *Gaul* and *Italy*.

The *Britons* thus robbed of their own strength were overrun by the *Picts*,

Picts, who poured upon them from the *Highlands*, now call'd *Scotland*, and ravaged the country.

The *Britons* in their distress call'd in the *Saxons* to their assistance, who subdued the *Picts*, but treacherously attacked and subdued the *Britons* also, driving them by degrees from all the fertile part of the country into *Wales*, and *Cornwall*, and thus settled their famous **HEPTARCHY**.

The seven *Saxon* Kingdoms were at first all heathens, and lived a while in tolerable harmony with each other. At length *Oswius*, the war-like king of *Northumberland*, fell upon the wealthy kingdom of *Mercia*, containing all the counties between the

Trent

Trent and the Thames, and subdued it: He was so bigoted a heathen as to put his own two Sons to death for having embrac'd christianity; but afterwards, bitterly repenting, was himself converted, and built the Cathedral of *Lichfield*, on the spot near which the foremention'd battle had been fought, and the christian army so horridly massacred; he called the place *Lichenfield*, or the *Field of dead bodies*,— **L I C H E N**, in the Saxon language, signifying *a dead body*,— which in *Staffordshire*, and the neighbouring counties is still retain'd; the gates of the Cathedral church-yard, and those of several parishes, through which funerals are carried, being called *Lich-gates*, by vulgar error now *Light-gates*.

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The *Mercian* Cathedral being thus founded, the *Northumbrians* driven back into their own country, and the *Mercian* kings restored, they became christians, and reigned in prosperity for three centuries, when the Great **OFFA** ascended the throne, who finding the Cathedral greatly out of repair, restored and rendered it more splendid than before, making it archiepiscopal, but that honour was not continued. About three centuries afterwards, the weather had so greatly injured the Cathedral, the roof being only cover'd with shingles, Bishop **CLINTON**, in the reign of **HENRY** the first, pull'd it entirely down, and rebuilt it upon the present magnificent scale; he roofed it with that noble stone vault, the admiration of architects, and worthy of the inspection of the curious; he then covered the whole with lead.

Bishop

Bishop LANGTON added the light and beautiful Lady - Choir, with its highly ornamented Screen, about the Year 1246 ; the *London* road to *Chester* being then carried round by STOW Church ; the obscure *Lane*, now called *Frog-Lane*, was then call'd *Throgmorton - Street*, and was the principal one of the town : He built the Bridge to carry the road straighter, and the street leading to it was called *Bridge-street*, by mistake now *Brid* and *Bird-street* ; *Brid*, *Bird* and *Bridge*, meaning in the *Lichfield* dialect the same thing : LANGTON also enlarged the CLOSE, and fortified it, with a strong wall and deep fosse, still in part remaining ; so that Bishop LANGTON may be justly stiled one of the principal founders and benefactors of *Lichfield*. [*Barrow-cop Hill*, the tomb of the three slain KINGS, with a basso reliefo

of the present church, was made the
City - Arms.]

Nothing very remarkable happen'd
to the Cathedral from this time to the
Reformation, when *Coventry*, which
had been long united to it, was *again*
disjoined, and its Monastery seized by
the King.

When the civil war broke out, the
nobility & gentry garrison'd the Close
and defended it against the Parliament
army under Lord BROOKE, and Sir
JOHN GELL, the former a virulent
fanatic and enemy to Cathedrals rais'd
a battery in the street, called *Dam-
street*, and early in the seige, standing
under a porch, giving directions to the
bombardeers, he was discovered from
the battlements of the Lady-Choir by
a deaf and dumb gentleman, named

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DYOTT, a family still much esteemed in the neighbourhood, who levelling his musket at him, the ball glanc'd on the lintel of the porch and plung'd into his eye ; the spot where he stood, in *Dam-street*, is still distinguished by a pavement of white pebbles ; and the lintel, thro' which the ball passed, is now preserved amongst the curiosities in Mr. GREENE's valuable Museum. But notwithstanding the loss of the General, and unskilfulness of the besiegers, who attacked the strongest instead of the weakest part of the fortifications, Sir JOHN GELL continued the seige, batter'd down the central large and beautiful spire, and in a month's time, the garrison submitted.

As this seems the first Cathedral that was seized, after an obstinate

resistance, the rage of civil war was then let loose, and tore the Temple itself,— the roof was strip'd of the lead, the carved work, monuments, and statues, were destroy'd with axes and hammers, the vaulted roof only escaped, either from the difficulty of demolishing it, or from the use they put it to ; making it a stable for their troop horses, and defiling it with their dung.

In the course of the war Prince RUPERT besieged the Close again, and the art of war being better understood, he rais'd his batteries in *Gayfield*, a rising hill north of the church, and which overlook'd the whole Close, and made the garrison submit, on the second day of the seige. Every one knows that the war ended in the destruction of the King, and many of the

the nobility and gentry, and then in the destruction of the parliament, by the usurper CROMWELL, and how soon after the Restoration followed.

Amongst all the tyrannies, sequestrations, and pillages made upon the church of *England*, Dr. JOHN HACKET, shewed himself its adherent and Hero, and offered his body even to martyrdom, rather than disobey its ordinances: He was at the begining of the civil war rector of *Saint Andrew's Holborn, London*; and when the parliament, as the commons alone call'd themselves, had voted down the liturgy of the church of *England*, and forbade the use of it, under the severest penalties; Dr. HACKET continued to read as before the daily service, and though a serjeant with a trooper rushed into the church, commanding

manding him with threats to desist, he with steady voice and intrepid countenance continued; on which the murderous bigot thrust his pistol at his head, threatening him with instant death; — the undaunted priest calmly replied, “*Soldier, I am doing my duty, do you do yours;*” and with still more exalted voice read on; — the soldier abashed, left the church.

After the Restoration, no wonder, such a protestant champion was made Bishop of *Lichfield*; and with the same zeal with which he defended its rights and ceremonies, he set about the restoration of his Cathedral. In the morning after his arrival at *Lichfield*, he roused all his servants by break of day, and with his coach-horses, and hir’d labourers, began the great work
of

of cleansing the augean stable, into which the enemy had reduced it. By his large contributions, and by assiduously applying and entreating every gentleman in the diocese, and almost every stranger that visited it, he is said to have raised 23,000l. an immense sum in that age, by this he restored the Cathedral to its present tolerable state. As he found the episopal palace in ruins, he procured two prebendal houses, that in which Mr. HOWARD now lives, and the present Registers' office, which he built as a banqueting-house to the other; he finished the church and this hall, about the same time, and consecrated the former with great pomp, form'd a service on purpose, and gave three magnificent entertainments, the one for the Dean and Chapter, and all the members of the Cathedral, and

Clergy

Clergy of the diocese; one for the Gentry; and one for the Bailiffs, Aldermen and Corporation.

The circular west window was rais'd by the Duke of YORK, in the reign of CHARLES the 2d, over which is the King's statue, and underneath, those of the kings of JUDEA. This window was ornamented with colour'd glass, in 1776, by a gift of the late benevolent Dean A D E N B R O O K E.

DIMENSIONS,

Length from the west to the east, is 411 feet, breadth of the body 153 feet, side isles 66 feet, the two west spires, about the same height, the great spire 256 feet.

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